

Message Text

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14-11

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4579

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USLO PEKING

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 3995

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PO, MC

SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE GARRISON TO WITHDRAW FROM MACAU

REF: A) HONG KONG A-68; B) HONG KONG 1465; C) CROSS-
LEANDRO MEMCON OF JANUARY 14, 1975

1. THE HONG KONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST (SCMP) ON APRIL 11 REPORTED MACAU GOVERNOR COLONEL LEANDRO AS STATING THAT THE GARRISON WILL BE WITHDRAWN WITHIN EIGHT MONTHS. THE GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT, MADE DURING AN APRIL 10 MACAU RADIO INTERVIEW, POINTED OUT THAT A STABLE POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC SITUATION, RATHER THAN A MILITARY PRESENCE, IS THE REQUISITE FOR MAINTAINING INTERNAL SECURITY. HE ADDED THAT LOCAL POLICE FORCES WERE ADEQUATE TO HANDLE CRIMINALS AND INTERNAL EMERGENCIES.

2. ON MARCH 8, AN SCMP ARTICLE QUOTED MACAU'S NEW DIRECTOR OF TOURISM AND INFORMATION, MANUEL DE LIMA, AS STATING TO HONG KONG NEWSMEN THAT "IN THE PAST, PORTUGAL HAD THE IDEA THAT MACAU HAD TO BE PROTECTED FROM EXTERNAL INVASION...THIS WAS AN ABSURD AND STUPID IDEA." HE ALSO NOTED THAT SECURITY
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FORCES WOULD BE REORGANIZED TO DEAL WITH INTERNAL

SECURITY.

3. COMMENT: PEKING CLEARLY HAS NO DESIRE TO DISTURB ITS STATUS QUO RELATIONSHIPS WITH MACAU NOR TO GIVE PORTUGAL'S PRO-MOSCOW PARTY AN OPENING ON THE ISSUE OF MACAU TO EM-BARRASS THE PRC (REFTELS). LISBON PROBABLY SEES THESE REASONS AS SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE THAT MACAU'S PRO-PEKING CHINESE POPULATION WILL SUPPORT LAW AND ORDER IN THE TINY COLONY.

4. WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY NOTED THE NEW GOVERNOR'S INTEREST IN MACAU'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DESIRE TO FREE MACAU FROM FINANCIAL DEPENDENCE ON PORTUGAL AND MAKE THE TINY ENCLAVE SELF-SUPPORTING. WITHDRAWAL OF THE 500-600 MAN GARRISON WOULD REDUCE ONE STRAIN ON MACAU'S BUDGET AND BE A STEP TOWARD ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOVERNOR'S GOALS. THE PORTUGUESE GARRISON HAS CHIEFLY BEEN ENGAGED IN POLICE-TYPE FUNCTIONS. THE PLANNED CONSOLIDATION OF MACAU'S VARIOUS POLICE UNITS APPARENTLY IS EXPECTED TO STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO COPE WITH ANY CIVIL DISORDERS. DISSATISFACTION WITH ASSIGNMENTS AND CONDITIONS AND MILITARY LIFE AMONG THE PORTUGUESE FORCES IN MACAU SURFACED AROUND THE TIME OF THE COUP IN LISBON AND PROMPTED LISBON'S NEW RULING MILITARY JUNTA TO DISPATCH A FACT-FINDING TEAM TO MACAU WHICH LED TO LAST YEAR'S SACKING OF THE MACAU GARRISON'S MILITARY COMMANDER. THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE GARRISON THUS MAY BE A MOVE AIMED AT LESSENING SOURCES OF LOCAL POLITICO-MILITARY FRICTIONS. GIVEN THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS AT HOME, DEPARTURE OF THE GARRISON FORCE FROM MACAU MAY ALSO BE RELATED DIRECTLY TO INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN LISBON, ALTHOUGH INFORMATION AVAILABLE HERE DOES NOT SEEM TO SUGGEST SUCH A CONCLUSION.

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